Webcast – The First Step is an Open Mind:
Best Practices for Working with LGBTQ Youth

Kristen:
Welcome to today's Homelessness Resource Center Webcast, "The First Step is an Open Mind: Best Practices for Working with Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning (LGBTQ) youth." My name is Kristen Paquette and I am the project director of the Homelessness Resource Center. On behalf of the HRC I would like to thank you for joining us. Today's webcast will provide an overview of the issues that LGBTQ youth face. It will also discus the best practice recommendations released by the National Alliance to End homelessness and implementation of these practices at the ALI Forney Center in New York City.

The Homelessness Resource Center is funded through the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the US Department of Health and Human Services. The HRC seeks to improve the daily lives of people affected by homelessness, and who have mental health and substance use problems and trauma histories. We seek to achieve this mission by increasing awareness, knowledge of resources, and capacity to people experiencing homelessness. Our work includes training, technical assistance, publications, online learning opportunities, and networking. I would invite all of you to visit our website at www.homeless.samhsa.gov

Now I will introduce our presenters and their organizations.

Carl Siciliano is the founder and the executive director of the Ali Forney Center, the nation's largest and most comprehensive organization dedicated to Homeless LBGT youth. From 1994 through 2001, Mr. Siciliano was the director of homeless youth services of SafeSpace in New York City. The mission of the Ali Forney Center is to help homeless LBGT youth be safe and become independent as they move from adolescence to adulthood. You can visit the Ali Forney website at www.aliforneycenter.org.

Richard Hooks-Wayman is the Senior Policy Analyst at the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Formerly the Public Policy Campaign Director for the Minnesota Youth Service Association, Mr. Hooks-Wayman authored the Minnesota Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Minnesota Youth Advancement Act. He received his Jurist-doctor degree from the University of Iowa College of Law in 1992. The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a non-partisan, mission-driven organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. Visit the Alliance's website at www.endhomelessness.org.

At this time, Richard and Carl, I will turn it over to you and you can get started on your presentation.

Rich:
Great, thank you Kristen. This is Rich Hooks-Wayman calling from the National Alliance to End Homelessness and we are happy to be taking part in today's webinar. I would like to specifically thank the Homelessness Resource Center for the opportunity to review this important topic with our national audience.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a non-profit, non-partisan organization in Washington, DC and we primarily focus on federal advocacy of homeless populations trying to end the social crisis of homelessness in America. I work, specifically, on unaccompanied homeless youth issues and came to the Alliance several years ago. I began to recognize that in the national debate around youth homelessness and services for homeless youth, there had not been a lot of focus nationally on the fact that within the homeless youth population there are disproportionate harms given to particular populations. One of whom tends to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer questioning youth.

So today's topic is really to help us explore and review what we know from research about the population of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning homeless youth, what we know about service interventions that may be helpful for this population. Carl is here with me today from the Ali Forney Center in New York to really talk about how it works on the ground and how his program got up and running and what is important to think about in trying to serve this population from a very focused lens. And also we would like to just finish off by just talking about some recommendations for best practices that our group, both Carl and I and some other national field leaders have began to publish. So we're very excited to have this discussion today and just pleased that we are able to answer questions as we go forward.

So the first thing I'm going to do today is simply start to walk through a little bit about what we know from data and research about the homeless youth population and in particular the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer questioning population, which we sometime abbreviate LGBTQ.

First of all let's just talk about the numbers. The slide that you see on your screen really talks about several incident studies that looked at the number of homeless youth in the United States. One of the better ones was done in 1999 and what it found was that approximately 1.6 million teenagers experience at least one night of homelessness per year. What it found was that, on these broad, there was a survey kind of done across broad public health spectrums with over thirty thousand adolescents. And what it found from that broad national survey was that anywhere from 5-7% of all teenagers experience at least one night of homelessness each year. And if we included a broader definition since that survey only looked at those youth 17 and under, it's probably pretty safe to say that if we define homeless youth as youth ages 12-24 kind of looking at the traditional definition of adolescents, which encompasses both teenage and early adult years, it is easy to say that we probably have over two million youth that experience at least one night of homelessness each year. The contributing factors include things like running away from home, directly related often times to abuse and neglect that those youth experience in their home environment, being locked out or abandoned by their parents or guardians, or running away or being emancipated or discharged from institutional or other state care, like foster care, juvenile justice placements or children's mental health treatment facilities would be kind of how people become homeless.

Some of the basic facts about youth homelessness are that as a population homeless youth or unaccompanied youth that means that they do not have family support, they are out on their own trying to survive in street environments or are doubled up with friends. They are aged 12-24 and

the term homelessness can mean those youth living on the streets, in shelters or in transitional living programs, places not meant for human habitation, like sleeping in cars or abandoned buildings or public spaces, or simply having an unstable temporary nighttime residence (i.e. other people's homes for very short periods of times). In the field we often refer to this as "couch hopping" or "couch surfing," which is where youth, because of their instability and because of their homelessness are only welcome to stay a few nights or maybe a week or two at any particular point and then they have to move rapidly among other places. So we look at all of those circumstances, whether living on the streets or in public spaces, in cars or maybe doubled up on someone's couch in rapid succession as examples of youth homelessness.

In the research around homeless youth, we often talk about the term runaway or homeless youth, and one of the things that I want to do as we begin this conversation is to recognize that in the research and what we know from the population there are actually subcategories of youth that fit underneath the broader umbrella of homeless youth. We call this the typology of homeless youth, and it includes different segments of the populations. If you look at the clinical research and study done on the populations in the last thirty years, I think it is clear that there have been about four major different typological categories that we could separate out.

The first category is simply runaway youth, those youth that have recently left their home and are fleeing an abusive or neglectful situation, but who have recently either hit the streets or have gone to a shelter or simply just recently left as a runaway.

Secondly, there is what we call "couch surfers," those that are transitory or episodic in their homelessness. These are youth that have runaway and have begun to kind of move in-between spaces. They may stay on someone's couch for a week; they may go home for a few days then have another conflict. They may go into a shelter; they may sleep on the streets. So they are kind of in and out of different sleeping arrangements and we call them transitory or "couch surfers."

The third major category is what we call the shelter-users or the "shelter-hoppers." Those are the typical homeless youth who have kind of worn out their welcome in the spaces that they would typically go to first. So when homeless youth first end up having to leave a home whether it is due to abandonment, abuse or neglect issues, or severe family conflict, they often times turn to other family members or friends in order to find places to stay. But, as often as typical, not many families have the means to take care of a teenager or young adult and may times they are welcome is worn thin and they end up having to rely on the shelter programs, and these then become temporary residences for these type of youth, where they hop from shelter to shelter because the shelter themselves only allow them stay for 15-20-30 days maybe at max.

The fourth major category is what I would refer to as the street dependent youth. Those youth that with their skills have learned to survive or attempt to thrive or survive in street environments. They may be squatting in abandoned buildings, they may be traveling across country, but they sleep many times in public spaces or in abandoned buildings or in parks or under bridges, and those are what we would call street dependent youth.

The reason I think it is important to talk about this typology is that even in regards to looking at the lens of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender homeless youth is how they are involved in

homeless youth says a lot about how we intervene and support that youth. So if I am dealing with a thirteen year old recent runaway, who has recently left home because of family rejection or severe family conflict, that intervention will look very different than if I am working with a 22 year-old gay homeless male youth, who maybe is involved in prostitution or chemical addiction on the streets. That intervention looks very different. So I think we have to be aware of these differences and begin to design programs that actually meet these different typologies.

So the question always comes up to me as a homeless youth advocate, what percentage of the homeless youth population actually identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. And what we did at the Alliance is we issued a research brief which you can access online at our website www.endhomelessness.org And what our research brief mostly did was look at a series of clinical studies and said that if you looked at all those studies together there is a huge range, some studies only showing a 4% incident rate and some studies showing a 50% incident rate. However, when we look at that research we think that there is a cluster, a pretty large cluster in fact that would find at least a conservative estimate would find that 20% of the homeless youth population, or 1 out of every 5 homeless kids are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender self-identified. That would equate to about three hundred thousand youth annually experiencing at least one night of homelessness each year. If we compare that to other studies of the adolescent population, which show that if you look at all teenagers of that population about 10% self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. Then clearly when you have 20% as a conservative estimate in the homeless population, we have a disproportional or an overrepresentation for LGBT kids. That means that lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender youth are at higher risk for becoming homeless that their non-LGBT peers.

I would have to say that even after looking at the studies though there may have been some under reporting because when people approach youth to do a study, because of the societal shame and negative risk factors associated with being self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, some LGBT youth may not self-identify for their own safety reasons. Therefore when these studies say that some percentage self-identified, that may be an under reporting because youth may not feel comfortable coming out to the surveyors or the study person.

The next slide I'm skipping over because it is just a repeat.

Then lets get to kind of why LGBT youth become homeless in the first place. That's always a question of kind of how youth get there and we also looked at some of the research studies that looked at this particular population and what we found was that there were multiple factors. And these multiple factors that contribute to youth homelessness include things like, severe family conflict, physical abuse, sexual abuse in the home, neglect, substance abuse and mental health disabilities, primarily of the parents and of minority cases of the youth, but primarily if the parent has a substance abuse or mental health disability that contributes to the homelessness of the child wanting to leave that environment. Another multiple factor can be abandonment or simply rejection related to the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity. However, what was clear from the research is that when youth were asked to identify the reason or reasons for their homelessness there often was at times multiple factors. I think that the stereotype out in the community is that kids are on the streets or running away because there has been one blow up or one big fight or there has been some big issue involved that happened once and then the kid left.

Whereas the research sends us a message that there is actually a compounding of factors that happen over the lifetime of a youth, so that a family may encounter poverty, it may encounter examples where the parents are involved in abusing the kids, and it also may include some type rejection or family crisis related to the youth's sexual orientation. But typically it is a combination of all those factors that propels the youth out of the home. There are most studies that indicate that family rejection as a primary factor is unlikely. So that if you ask me, is family rejection related to the sexual orientation or gender identity of a transgender youth, the primary factor for youth homelessness? The answer in most studies is no. It is one of several factors that contribute to it, maybe present, but it is simply not the only or single primary factor.

The other thing that research tells us is that LGBT homeless youth have a double whammy. Not only are they at higher risk of becoming homeless because of those multiple factors that we just talked about, but then while homeless, they are exposed to greater levels of harm and risks, while either homeless in shelter or double-up situations, or certainly living on the streets. So what we know from research is that LGBT homeless youth runaway more frequently and is exposed to greater victimization on the streets than their heterosexual peers. LGBT youth are at higher risk for being both victims and perpetrators of physical violence as compared to the general youth population. And they have higher rates of being assaulted while homeless than their heterosexual homeless youth peers. There are also mental health challenges. Studies have shown that lesbian homeless youth were more likely to experience post-traumatic stress syndrome, conduct disorder, and alcohol and substance use than their heterosexual homeless youth women that they are compared to. Likewise, gay homeless males were actually less likely to meet criteria for conduct disorder or alcohol abuse than their heterosexual homeless peers. LGBT homeless youth are also more likely to attempt suicide; in fact the studies indicate that when looking at lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered homeless youth, 62% report that they have attempted suicide compared to only 29% of their heterosexual peers. That's a huge factor for me, so that any program that is attempting to serve homeless youth that is able to self-identify a youth as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, should take special steps to identify mental health concerns as it relates to suicide ideation and suicide attempts. So I think that is a major point that we should remember from the research.

The other thing that I would add is that the research is pretty clear that LGBT homeless youth are at constant risk for solicitation and sexual exploitations. LGBT homeless youth experience an average of 7.4 more acts of sexual violence than their heterosexual peers. They have twice the rates of sexual victimization than the heterosexual peers that they're compared to and LGBTQ homeless youth report double the rates of sexual abuse before the age of 12. Also, lesbian, gay, and bisexual homeless youth are solicited to exchange sex for money, food, drugs, shelter, and clothing more often than their straight peers, which I think is interesting, and also should be a common factor in trying to intervene with this population that the heightened risk that they are exposed to around victimization and sexualization should always be in the forefront of any conversation to help them achieve greater safety.

The last area is about chemical and alcohol abuse. A Washington study of 84 lesbian, gay, bisexual homeless youth found that they use substances more frequently than their heterosexual peers. In fact significant differences were noted in the rates of consumption of cocaine, crack, and crystal meth. There interesting thing that I would also want to add though that there is

chemical abuse and alcohol abuse but it's hard to delineate if there is actual addiction. I think there is a common misperception out in the community that all homeless kids whether gay or straight are probably addicted to alcohol or drugs and that's why they are on the streets when actually they use chemicals or alcohol and this research is not conclusive on even what percentage is certainly addicted to a level of addiction needing specific interventions. Obviously many youth experiment with drugs and alcohol, just like homeless youth experiment with drugs and alcohol to the point of maybe even abusing those substances but that doesn't mean they fall into the area of addiction. So I think we need to step lightly into our stereotypes around this population and begin to design programs that recognize the risk factors while not brush stroking everybody as being an addict.

So, in talking about them, what we know about research and interventions that work for LGBT homeless youth, I would say we need to think about this in four general service configurations. Figuring out what really works and making sure we are really reaching youth and serving them with quality services in a community. I would advocate as a homeless youth advocate and policy analyst that policy and advocacy center around ensuring that each location has four general service configurations, one being outreach. Certainly youth, when they first become homeless don't always know about services. They don't have a sense of the non-profit world. They don't know that there is government funded programs and they need an opportunity to meet with safe adults who can allow them that opportunity to engage in a positive, healthy relationship and then refer them to services that may be most appropriate to meet their needs.

The second general service area would be around prevention and family preservation services. Well, it is certainly true that many LGBT homeless youth experience severe family conflict and family rejection related to their sexual orientation and gender identity, it is also true that some families can move beyond that initial reaction and heal and build healthy relationships. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of services out in the community that help teenagers resolve family conflict. So when a family conflict comes up around school, personal identity issues, or about sexual orientation or gender identity issues, there are not a lot of positive youth development service programs that help to resolve family conflict. I would hope that each community begins to talk about how we can prevent youth homelessness by dealing with youth in their family context. I would be the first one to say that I do not want youth to stay with an abusive, exploitative, or neglectful parent. But to the extent to which those issues can be mitigated through counseling, treatment, or just intervention services, I think we should try our best to try to fix and help support families and then if necessary look for independent options for youth.

The third opportunity that we need to look at for service configuration is obviously emergency shelters. When there is crisis and youth cannot stay home, there does need to be in place a safe space for youth to go to at night to stay off the streets and receive adult assistance. And again, hooking up with services and finding out where the opportunities are.

And finally, when family reunification is not an option, which unfortunately for a lot of our youth it is not an option, there needs to be youth housing opportunities. There are many different types of models around youth housing, and there does I think in every community need to be enough units available so that youth do not get stuck in shelter because there is no opportunity to

move beyond there because there is no housing opportunities for them. What that means is a variety of housing models. On the screen you will see this chart with different ideas for youth housing. This can include host homes, shared homes where a staff stays on site and shares a small unit of housing with youth to help them with mentorship and skill-building, supervised or scattered site apartments where a youth is tracked and given a rental subsidy to afford the apartment. Potential solutions can also be shallow subsidies, which is possible that some youth could just benefit from financial systems to get off the streets into private housing. Maybe they have a part time job or full time job but they need some financial assistance to get off the streets. There are also youth with certain needs; these would be youth with disabilities or cognitive delays related to needing long term support in affordable housing. So all of that's possibilities around youth housing and I think needs to be part of the configuration that we develop in any continuum of care for youth in a local area. So I hope that as we move forward we begin to start to advocate on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth to have access to outreach, prevention and early intervention family preservation services, crisis intervention, like shelters and drop-in centers, and finally, youth housing opportunities. That's part of the spectrum that should be in place.

There is of course a national lack of capacity to serve homeless youth in our nation. Annually the federal government, the Department of Health and Human Services funds local programs through something called the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. That program includes programs that do outreach, emergency shelters, and transitional housing. And from the data from 2008 we know that in just one year we made over 740,000 contacts with youth on the streets. But less than 43,000 actually got to a shelter bed and less than 4,000 actually got to transitional housing. So that is a pretty steep decline from the number of youth that we are reaching, over half a million kids on the streets, to less than 10% actually receiving bed space either through shelter or transitional housing. And it's this area that I think we also need to be aware of that a lack of federal, state, and local funding is the primary barrier. If we wanted to really end youth homelessness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, and queer and questioning youth, we need obviously to increase the public investment in services.

So that was kind of the broad brush over stroke of what we know from research and data, and I wanted to pass now the conversation to the Ali Forney Center in New York City, which is a really excellent program and one that we highlight here at the Alliance as a best practice program. So Carl, if you could take over I would really appreciate it.

Carl:
Thank you very much Rich.

First of all I would like to say how grateful and appreciative I am that so many people are listening. I started working with LGBT youth in the 90s. At that time there just seemed to be much less awareness and interest in this population. And so, seeing so many people is very gratifying. I would also like to thank Rich and the National Alliance to End Homelessness for the leadership that they have been showing in advocating for this population and doing a lot of good work over the last several years with homeless LGBT youth issues. It's really gratifying for me to see that there is more of a response on a national level to the urgent needs of this population.

What I would first like to talk about is really my personal experience in working with homeless LGBT youth over the last 15 years in New York City and some factors that went into the creation of the Ali Forney Center.

I started working with homeless youth in New York City in 1994, at which point I became the director of a drop-in center in Time Square called SafeSpace. SafeSpace was a program that served the whole population of homeless youth in New York City; it wasn't an LGBT specific program. But we made a great effort to make sure that our program was accessible and appropriate for LGBT youth. We were aware that most of the data that was in existence at that time in New York City showed that about 1/3 of the population on the streets of New York City was LGBT, in terms of the homeless youth population. And we wanted to make sure that our program was safe and accessible to LGBT youth. I think that one of the ways that we were most able to do that was making sure that we had a significant number of openly LGBT staff, myself included as the director. I think that sends a very strong message to the young people that if it is safe for staff to be out and open, then it was also going to be safe for youth to be out and open. Also, our outreach efforts, we certainly targeted areas where we knew LGBT youth congregated and cultural centers for homeless LGBT youth in New York City, Christopher Street and the piers the west side of Manhattan certainly being ground zero of that.

When I started working at SafeSpace in the mid-90s, there was only one shelter in New York City that was available to homeless youth. It was a very large warehouse shelter that was run by the Catholic Church. What I quickly became aware of was that the LGBT youth that we were working with at SafeSpace did not have safe and equal access to this shelter.

I will never forget some of the first stories that I heard from the young people that I worked with. One young gay man was very effeminate. I remember him telling me that he had tried to stay at this program and how when he slept in his dorm room at night, the other 14 young people that shared the dorm room with him waited for him to fall asleep and then after he fell asleep, they gathered around his bed and they urinated on him as a way to show their hatred and disgust of having to share their dorm with an openly gay person.

I remember another young person telling me how he had gone to this program and tried to go twice. The first time he went one of the other people in his dorm wrapped batteries in a sock and hit him in the head with this home made weapon, again, as a way to express hatred and rejection of this person as a gay person. Several months later he tried again to go stay there and the other kids in the dorm room said "faggots don't get to sleep in the beds" and they made him sleep on the floor.

So, I quickly became aware that the LGBT youth that were coming to us at SafeSpace didn't have safe and equal access to the homeless service system that was in existence at that time. This lack of access and lack of equal access to resources played out in a really brutal way because during the years that I was at SafeSpace, every several months, one of our kids would get murdered on the streets. And the reason that was happening was because they were just really out there surviving on the streets. They didn't have access to shelter and they were surviving in very dangerous ways often through prostitution and drug dealing, which put them at terrible risk

and harm. Ali Forney, who I since named the Ali Forney Center after, was one of the young people who I knew very well who was murdered.

I think it's a little illuminative to look at Ali's experience because Ali was a very effeminate boy who later identified sometimes as a boy and sometimes as a transgender girl. Ali sort of had a fluidity of gender expression. But, when Ali was 13 years old, his mother put him out of the housing project he lived in Brooklyn because she couldn't handle the fact that he kept getting beaten up by all of the other kids in the housing project. Ali was in and out of the foster care system for the next several years, but he kept getting beaten up and harassed in the foster care system. I remember him telling me a story about how he had to barricade himself in a room with a chair propped up against the door because the other kids were trying to kill him, so he ran away from foster care 16 times. Finally by the time he was 16 years old, he was abjectly homeless on the streets with no where to go. He certainly didn't feel like he could go to this one main shelter. Ali was murdered in 1997 at the age of 22. Like I said, Ali was one of the 7 young people I knew in the 90s who were LGBT and murdered on the streets.

At SafeSpace we were very pleased with the fact that we were able to effectively integrate the LGBT and heterosexual youth. And one of the things that I liked about the program was the fact that it wasn't an LGBT specific program in the sense that what I would see was that a lot of young people would come to us when they were still in the closet. But, when they would see an environment where LGBT youth were affirmed and celebrated and where straight youth and LGBT youth could co-exist with a certain degree of harmony and where straight staff and LGBT staff was able to co-exist with mutual respect and harmony, it became an environment where a lot of them felt safe to come out. And I felt that those kids wouldn't have come to SafeSpace if it had been an LGBT specific program because they would have had to out themselves by virtue of coming and they weren't ready to do that. So in the early years that I was at SafeSpace, I really appreciated that.

I saw a phenomena happening as the 90s went on where there was this infiltration of violent street gangs into the homeless youth service field. A lot of our kids would be in and out of jail periodically usually for their involvement with drugs and to a lesser degree, prostitution. And when they were in jail they would be recruited for these violent street gangs, like the Bloods, the Cripps, and the Latin Kings. These street gangs were very homophobic and you couldn't be a member of the gang and be gay. In fact, most of the gangs, if they found out you were gay and a gang member, they would actually kill you. So these kids would come out of jail and have been recruited into the gang so that the gang activity really started to become more prevalent in our program. A lot of the gay kids started to not want to come because they didn't want to have to deal with all of the harassment they would deal with the gangs. It was a territorial thing, where it was their territory for ten blocks in every direction so kids were harassed just trying to get to the program.

Around that time I started a program affiliated with SafeSpace called Safe Haven, a model where we would rent apartment s and with staff supervision, have 6 young people living in an apartment. We got a point where we had about 7 different apartments like that. I ended up determining that I would make one of these apartments specifically for LGBT youth, a safe space in their life where they didn't have to worry about harassment and have to worry about defending

themselves. It was realty remarkable to me to see how the young people thrived in that kind of a setting and seeing how, once they were able to let their guard down, they were more able to focus on many of the other issues that they needed to address in their lives in terms of escaping from homelessness, like getting jobs, mental health treatment, and pursuing their education. Once they had a space where they could feel faith and affirmed about being gay without having to be harassed, they were able to put so much more energy into the positive things that they needed to accomplish, rather than defending themselves.

In 2002 I started the Ali Forney Center. What I had come to feel very strongly was that in NYC, which was the birthplace of the modern gay rights movement, it was just scandalous that there were so many LGBT youth out on the streets without any kind of shelter program that was available and dedicated to them. It was really interesting. I started with a very small budget; I started with one donor giving us $37,000 and a church giving us the use of their basement. We determined that we would shelter 6 people in this space while we tried to get additional funds and additional spaces. The day that we opened in 2002, we had 20 people on a waiting list for our 6 beds. Within a few weeks, we were turning away almost 100 kids a night. It was just remarkable how once there was a program for LGBT youth, they just presented themselves so dramatically, and the need presented itself so dramatically.

It was interesting on a public policy level for the city to see that because before we existed, I don't think that the city ever understood the extent of the need. Once we were able to open up and address that need, the need presented itself very dramatically and within a year I had a list of 1,000 young people who had been turned away. I was able to take that list and go to people with leadership positions in the city and start to really aggressively advocate that more funds become available. Now we have gotten to the point at the Ali Forney Center where we have become the largest and most comprehensive organization in the country dedicated to homeless LGBT youth. 7 years later we are now sheltering 48 people per night in 9 different residential facilities. In July we are hoping to get that number up to 60 per night.

We also have 2 drop-in centers, one in the Chelsea section of Manhattan, which is sort of our initial intake/triage space. We provide mental health treatment, medical care, HIV testing, and we do a lot of work with kids that are abjectly on the streets trying to hook them up to housing and shelter and helping them to acquire the basic level of support they need to get off of the streets. Our second drop-in center is at the South Slope section of Brooklyn. That is more of a support center for the young people in our housing and we focus more on independent living skills. We have an on-sight GED program, we have a job training and placement program, and we do a lot of work around preparing young people to live independently and helping them get their own independent lives together. We also have a street outreach program and as I said, we have a residential program.

The residential program is actually broken into two components. We have an emergency housing program, where LGBT youth can stay for up to 6 months. And we have a transitional living program, where LGBT youth can for up to 2 years. As I say, it continues to be remarkable to see both the need that continues to present itself. We still have every night between 100 and 150 people on a waiting list waiting to get into our beds. It is also remarkable to see, with the level of support we bring to the young people, how many of them are thriving. Many of the youth now

have graduated and moved on to their own apartments, have their own jobs, graduated from college, and its really gratifying for us to see how they thrive with the level of support we have brought to them.

When I first started the Ali Forney Center, it was really just thinking that LGBT youth needed to have access to safe shelter. My thinking with the program has evolved over the years to the point where what I see is we are in this phenomenon that there are many thousands of parents who are unable or unwilling to adequately support their LGBT youth. I feel like the LGBT community has a real obligation to be creating structures that step in when the parents won't do their work and do the work that needs to be done, and create the structures that need to be created to make sure that these youth transition safely in a healthy way as becoming adults. And that is what our program is. Back over to Rich.

Rich:
Great, thank you Carl. That was a really great introduction to your center and again I think what we found here at the Alliance is that when dedicated individuals actually help build a spectrum of resources for youth, youth will thrive. Like Carl said, it's remarkable to see, a theme to repeat on is that the situation is not hopeless, we do know what works, and it's simply about better planning and trying to target interventions that really work with this population and being really specific.

The Ali Forney Center is one of those few programs around the nation that is actually culturally focused on LGBT homeless youth. There are many programs around the nation that serve homeless youth that are competent to serve many populations whether it be youth of color, African-American, Latino, Asian-American, American Indian youth or youth with disabilities. There are programs that obviously need to look at their practices and policies in how they serve gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth because of the disproportional and overrepresentation that occurs in the population for homelessness.

One of the things that we were aware of here at the National Alliance to End Homelessness was that there was a lack of dialogue about this, so we, in 2007, formed the National Advisory Council on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning homeless youth. It was this Advisory Council that first met in 2007 and then again in
2008 that recognized in the field, a need for a national guide to help non-profit programs serving homeless youth do a better job of providing quality services and being inclusive for LGBT youth. One of the things that Carl and I both believe is that many programs talk about tolerating homeless youth that are gay and lesbian, and for us, I think, tolerance is a negative form of acceptance. No one wants to be just tolerated, we all want to be nurtured and celebrated and included in any type of activity that we encounter in our society, or in our own community. It's that hope that I think we bring to this project, that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth do deserve programs that are inclusive to the extent of actually nurturing their needs, not just simply tolerating them. I think programs need some assistance in finding out what that really means in providing day to day practices and implementing policies across the organization.

A couple of organizations that make up the Advisory Council decided to publish a national recommended best practices in serving LGBT homeless youth guide. It is kind of a long title, but it actually does what I think it supports to, it actually sets out sort of national recommendations around how to approach these best practices perspective. The authors include Lambda Legal, the National Center on Lesbian Rights in California, the National Network for Youth here in Washington, DC, and the National Alliance to End homelessness, my shop. We really wanted to work on building culturally competent or culturally proficient services for LGBT homeless youth. The recommendations that we published recently in this guide, really broke down into three sections. There are recommendations for staff or personnel in the organization that serve homeless youth. There are recommendations for managers, supervisors, and directors of the program. And third, there was specific recommendations made for programs offering residential care, shelter, and housing.

This guide was really published as an opportunity to offer guidance to develop agency policies and practice, but also towards an eye of evaluation that this guide could be used to help agencies self-identify and evaluate their own inclusivity for LGBT homeless youth. So today we are just going to spend a few minutes walking through some of the specific recommendations that we made.

The first one I want to talk about is just sort of a sample specific recommendation for personnel or staff. These are the individuals that have any contact with youth directly in non-profit agency programs. It might be the intake worker; it could be the youth advocate, the case manager, it could be the team leader, or the residential director. So, some of the recommendations for staff is to examine their own personal beliefs and attitudes, to gage interpersonal responses to LGBT youth.

One of the first things that LGBTQ youth will tell you is that they obviously almost always get an immediate reaction to when they first meet people on whether or not they are being accepted, or simply being tolerated, or even rejected. Look at your own personal beliefs and attitudes and make sure those aren't hindering your interpersonal connection with the youth. Know what to say and do when a youth self-discloses their LGBT status. We need to be affirming in our response to them, that it is not simply ok just to be silent because the youth take silence as an announcement to rejection. We need to have a positive verbal affirmation and then we need to know what steps to take in order to support that youth, finding them resources in the community and trying to help them connect with people that will be safe and healthy and positive in their lives. We need to appropriately address LGBT identity intake, so that means not to assume a youth is straight or of a particular gender. We need to support access to education and health care that is inclusive of LGBT youth.

It will not help our clients if they are sent to other programs, schools, health care clinics, or other services that are homophobic or exclusionary. We should be professional enough to call transgender youth by the name and pronouns they prefer. This is a huge issue for these youth and they should be affirmed in expressing their identity. We should avoid assumptions about sexual orientation of transgender youth people. Many times in society when service providers encounter transgender youth, youth with a gender identity, then there is an assumption that they are gay or

lesbian. We know from research and personal experiences that there is a difference between sexual orientation and gender identity.

The last thing we would want our staff to do is inform youth of community resources. Staff should be educated about what resources exist in a community and actually act as advocates for expanding services when they don't exist. So those are just some of the sample recommendations. I didn't say this in the beginning, but the guide is available online in several different places. Lambda Legal has it up on their website, as well as my group the Alliance, has it up on our website as well. The guide is free to the public, it is not copyrighted in the sense that we wanted it to be widely used and distributed. So if you would like to see the full report, please download it, share it, copy it, send it around, and hopefully use it in your trainings and discussions in your community.

The next major set of recommendations was specific to supervisors and directors. Some samples include discussions about how to create a positive, physical environment by using visuals. When I walk into a space, whether it be a drop-in center, a shelter, or just an administrative office, youth look around the walls and around the space to see what kind of environment this is. If they see things from their own community in that environment, they will be more likely to feel safe and be able to talk about their problems. So, using posters, visuals, and flags are always really important, especially with LGBT youth. We hope that the agencies will use outreach materials that explicitly mention work with LGBT youth. Without explicitly stating it, the youth will assume you don't serve their population, so it needs to be explicit. Agencies should adopt and implement non-discrimination policies and supervisors and directors need to be at the forefront of that change. The agencies, once they have adopted these non-discrimination policies should establish grievance procedures. What happens when something goes wrong?

Additionally to all of that, there should be an adoption of confidentiality policies, regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status. When is it okay to divulge sexual orientation, gender identity, or HIV status to other agencies, public groups, parents, or family members for example? There should be a confidentiality agreement that should be well documented, and workers should be trained on that, and the youth should be informed of those confidentiality agreements as well.

Staff should be provided with competency training. We shouldn't assume that people come to the job with skills in order to effectively support, affirm, and serve LGBT youth. So we need to have competency training. We need to recruit and hire diverse and competent staff. This may be obvious to many people, but skills should cut across all cultures and all social economic classes. So, hiring a diverse staff that is able to work with this population is important. We also, finally, need to encourage our staff and our agencies to develop connections with the LGBT adult community and service providers in services for our youth, and help offer solutions to fill those gaps. So those are just some sample recommendations, again there are more.

Finally, there are a few sample recommendations on our screen now in regards to residential programs, those programs that provide transitional, supportive housing, or shelter care. In regards to these residential programs, you do not necessarily need to isolate or segregate LGBT youth. I think in the past we have heard of some programs that felt it was in the best interest or

safety of LGBT youth to segregate them away from other youth in the population, but LGBT youth experience a lot of social stigma isolation in the mainstream society. So, if they encounter that in a residential space, it just heightens that. Of course youth can be segregated for their safety if there is a need warranted because of hostility or harassment. But we don't think this should be the automatic fall back for this situation. We also would like to encourage residential spaces that transgender youth are not automatically placed on their assigned sex at birth, but are given opportunities to be aligned with bed spaces based on their gender identity.

Agencies should screen for hostile or threatening peer roommates. Just as Carl was saying about his clients that were harassed, abused, and actually assaulted in these spaces, staff should monitor that and create an environment where that is not allowed. Obviously, the last recommendation is that we should maintain regular contact with youth when we are placed in scattered site housing, so that if I run a transitional or supportive housing program and I have several places scattered throughout the city, regular contact should be part of my best practices and my program to ensure that youth have constant contact to relay their own concerns. The youth should be encouraged to create a safety plan against harassment or assault in those places, so they know what to do if they are exposed to any harassment or assault.

These are just a sampling. The report is about 20 pages long, and again I really encourage you to look at all of the recommendations in an opportunity to develop your own local policies and practices, and to evaluate your services. Circulate and share widely. On the screen now is a link to where you can find the guide for yourself. We are really happy that we were able to produce this.

I think that the National Advisory Council recognizes that our work is really in two major areas. One is expanding the number of services in the community for LGBT youth. Going back to that concern that we have that a lot of kids are turned away and don't get the help they need because of a lack of bed space or a lack of professional supportive services in their area. So, we are doing what we can here with congress and on local scenes to try to expand that spectrum. The second thing that we need to ensure is that the existing services are actually accepting and affirming of our youth and provide really high quality services to help them lead lives of self-affirmation and self-identity.

I am really happy to be a part of this movement. Lastly, I would like to add that we are just going to provide a quick overview of federal policy and funding in case people want to know where I turn to look for opportunities. Just as a quick overview, the Department of Health and Human Services has the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. That Act funds shelter programs, outreach, and transitional living programs. Congress appropriated for the FY 2009 over $115 million.

In addition to those funds, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance grants, which is actually at about $1.6 billion. It includes supportive housing program section 8 opportunities and emergency shelter grant programs.

In addition the HUD program also does something called the Family Unification Program, which helps support youth transitioning out of foster care find residential vouchers and rent assistance

to find their own apartments and be secure as young adults. That is set about $40 million in combination funding between FY 2009 and FY 2009.

Finally, on the good news, the Economic Recovery Act, something called the American Reinvestment Act actually dedicated $1.5 billion additional dollars to homeless prevention and rapid re-housing programs. While this money probably can't be used to support additional shelters or be used to actually establish housing for youth, it can be used to support case workers and outreach workers to help youth connect back with housing resources in the community. Those workers can be coupled with actually short-term and medium-term rental vouchers from 3-18 months. This is a good program to look at how do we prevent homelessness? How do we reconnect youth with family or extended family that is willing to accept them into their home and provide them with long-term care? How do we provide medium or rapid re-housing for these youth with rental assistance? I would really encourage you to contact your local HUD office and your local Continuum of Care providers about this money that just recently came out. It is a large chunk of money, $1.5 billion and I think it could go a long way in helping us secure some additional dollars for this population. That is a quick overview and I am happy to help anybody answer questions about other federal issues or just contact the Alliance at any time.

The final screen is just our contact information. I will just say as we wrap up that I have been in the field of advocating for homeless youth for over 15 years now. In fact, I was involved in helping to establish a host home program for LGBT homeless youth back in the 1990s and have been a foster parent and guardian host home to LGBT youth. It has been one of the most life changing experiences I have had in my life time. The youth are searching for adults that can provide them with some recognition, affirmation, and support. These are good kids. They have tremendous amounts of skill and they are resilient, they would not be in their places if they were not resilient and had great hopes for their future. To the extent that we can end youth homelessness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth, I think would be a great movement for our society to try to achieve and I hope that we will continue to try and work towards that end.

That's what I would say at the very end. Please feel free to contact me at the Alliance. I am not going to turn it over to Carl for his last remarks from the Ali Forney Center.

Carl:
Thanks Rich. I also just want to give you a shout out for the work that you have done with host homes for LGBT youth. I think that you are a real innovator with that, and I really appreciate that kind of effort that you personally put in.

I want to talk briefly about the work that we did at SafeSpace to make our program more safe and accessible to LGBT youth. I really do think that it starts with the staff. I think it is very important for supervisors who are bringing staff in to work with homeless youth to be recognizing that homeless youth are a disproportionally large percentage of the population and that staff need to be culturally competent to work with this population. I think a lot of it starts with the interview process. I think we have to ask very pointed questions when we are interviewing about people's experience with and attitudes towards LGBT youth and the LGBT community. I obviously would say that if somebody's position is that LGBT issues are sinful,

disgusting, or perverse, that that would be somebody who is not culturally competent to work with the population. I would be screening those people out in the interview process. I think that's a very important issue that we have to look at. We have to look at who's working in these programs with our youth and are they going to be accepting and affirming of this population. Very often there are problems with staff. I am going to talk about an experience I know of.

I work closely with another organization in the city that was doing city-wide street outreach. If they found youth in the middle of the night, they would bring them to a shelter that was available in the city. The biggest shelter in the city was the same shelter that had many of the violent situations and harassment situations that I mentioned before. More recently, just several years ago, the outreach workers would be bringing people, and the intake worker would announce when she realized that someone was LGBT that they were going to go to hell. She felt that it was her role to tell them that. I can't imagine a more immediate way to demonstrate to youth that you are not providing a safe, welcoming, and affirming environment to have a staff person feel called upon to say that. We have to make sure we have staff that doesn't believe that as a pre-condition for creating a safe environment. I think that's incredibly important.

I also think that it's a generally accepted practice that if you are looking to be culturally competent in working with populations, that you work to have representative members of that population. So just like if you are working with a population that is largely African-American or largely Latino, you would look to have staff members who are African-American and Latino. I think the same principle applies to LGBT. I think that if we are going to be culturally competent, we have to have staff that is LGBT making up a portion of our staff working with this population. Again, I have said this before, but I think that it is so important, I think the way the staff role model how they can coexist with respect and acceptance of one another sets an enormous tone for the young people. From day 1 when a young person enters the program, these are programs that are safe, affirming, and accepting of everyone. We have to make very clear of our rules, our policies, and intakes that LGBT people are going to be respected and affirmed as a condition of people accessing the program.

The next thing I think is very important is that there be a real sense of awareness on the part of staff. A part of their role is that they help different kinds of young people learn how to coexist with respect and self-acceptance of one another. At SafeSpace we have always had groups and workshops that were focused on conflict resolution and helping people talk out their differences in a safe environment and learn how to respect one another. We would have groups that were specifically for LGBT folks and specifically for trans folks, but then we also really tried to incorporate into our totality of our groups a sense that there was a real priority and sense of respect and acceptance.

I am going to repeat something that Rich said, I think that it's so important that we are affirming and valuing who they are. I think there are all kinds of ways to do that. I think that through our outreach efforts, by having the LGBT youth see that we are searching for them and desiring to have them be a part of our program is very important. I think that giving space for their cultural expressions is really important in our programs. A lot of LGBT youth cultures are focused around dance, vogue, and runway. Creating spaces in the program where that aspect of their lives and of their sense of fun and sense of joy within themselves is given expression sends a real

powerful message to all of the youth, but certainly to the LGBT youth that we value, accept, and affirm them.

I really agree with Rich that no one just wants to be tolerated. That sounds like you smell bad and someone is just holding their nose and coping with you reluctantly. LGBT youth often feel that they are somewhere on a continuum between hostile rejection and barely tolerated. I think for them to be able to succeed in these programs, they have to be able to feel that they are valued and celebrated. That's where I am going to close my remarks for here.

Kristen:
Ok, great! Thank you so much Rich and Carl for all of this wonderful information. We do have quite a few great questions from our audience. I will cover as many as we have time for.

The first question is…if a community doesn't have any specific programs for LGBT homeless youth, what can we establish first? Where do we begin?

Carl:
I think it is incredibly important to assess and have proof of need. I would say that if there are homeless youth programs, that an effort to quantify how many of the young people come into the homeless youth programs are LGBT is very important. I also think that if there are gay youth programs, quantifying how many youth access those programs that are homeless, is equally important.

In New York City it was really interesting because before we had the Ali Forney Center, no one was really effectively quantifying the extent of the need. The need was being estimated by a bunch of different studies and people, but there was no hard core evidence. I really think it is very important to be able to show the need. By reaching out to homeless youth programs and determining how many of the participants are LGBT is important, and by reaching out to LGBT youth programs and figuring out how many participants are homeless is also important.

Rich:
If I could just add to that, I think you are spot on Carl, but the only thing that I would add is that New York is obviously a very special place in that you have a mass amount of people and you have a high need there. There are many rural and isolated areas of the United States that maybe it is going to be harder to quantify. There won't be a gay youth center or even a homeless youth program in the area. So I think in those areas what I would add is that, I think youth need to feel safe in their community in order to even self-identify. So the first thing I would do is to try and create a social space where youth can self-identify and be affirmed. Whether that is a youth drop-in center, space that they can go to, or even a dance that is safe with adult chaperones once a month where LGBT youth can come and network, I think it is really important to build a sense of community. Out of that community comes the identification of needs, whether it is around housing, family support, educational, or mental health or whatever it is, we can try to address those and get support.

I would also just generally say, I think that if I was stepping into the homeless youth field for the first time, and I was going to design a program and a space where there wasn't a program around

the city, my first response would not be to build a shelter. Shelters are expensive and are a short term measure absolutely needed within a larger spectrum, but I think the first thing to do would be to create mobile teams of case workers throughout the school and community setting, build relationships with youth, number one, and as Carl says, build the case as why additional services are necessary. Through that mobile team, maybe you can identify where the youth are congregating and what needs they have and then build structures to support them, whether that be shelter or housing programs, or just a drop-in center.

Carl:
Just to tie this up, I agree with Rich that many localities don't have the kind of resources that New York City has. So I think that we have to make sure that in those localities that the shelter and homeless youth services that do exist are LGBT safe. So, advocating, examining, and looking at that, I think is going to be a huge step. I also think that in cities that are large enough to have LGBT centers, the experience of the LGBT center in Los Angeles is helpful because they have a large LGBT community center and they realized that a lot of the young people who were coming to them were homeless, and they actually developed one of the first homeless LGBT shelters as a component of their program. I think LGBT centers and localities can become a springboard for developing homeless programs that address homeless LGBT youth.

Kristen:
Thank you. The next question is one that came up among a few of our audience members related to staff training. What advice do you have for orienting or training new volunteers or staff who work with LGBT youth?

Rich:
Well I think one of the first things, obviously, is to find competent people in your area that can offer that level of training. In fact the Child Welfare League of America, which is a national organization here in DC, along with some others, recently completed a national training of trainers, where they took 40-50 people to an intensive training program to help them identify their skills in providing competency building to other non-profit organizations and community groups around responding to the needs of LGBT youth. It was primarily focused around LGBT foster youth, but it think its applications add to a lot of our services. My advice again is to reach out to something that Carl said which are the LGBT adult centers and community centers in your area. If there are LGBT advocacy organizations find out who is able to do the training, number 1 that can provide you with a really well-rounded, comprehensive curriculum for your staff.

The guide that is published that we have been talking about today does have a glossary of terms that is really interesting and helpful to people because a lot of people don't know what transgender means, doesn't know what queer means, doesn't have a sense of intersex individuals and those types of things. So the glossary helps define some of this stuff. But, you need to go beyond definitions. We are talking about skill-building and responding to people and their needs. So, start with finding a comprehensive curriculum.

I think it's also about setting the tone of expectation. One of the things that the guide recommends that is very important is not only do we see this as part of the orientation process to any new employee, but anyone that comes into the program should just be automatically trained

on competency building around specialty populations, whether that be youth with disabilities, youth of color, or LGBT youth, that all should be wrapped up together in any beginning orientation of a new worker. Ongoing competency training should be provided to the workers as well to make sure that they are feeling comfortable to respond to crises or issues that may come up in the program and practices that they employ everyday. I think that's where I would kind of start. I would also just say, I think it is important to set that as an agency culture. A good organization recognizes that life is about on going learning and opportunities to improve ourselves, and this is just part of our process.

That's again where I would start, looking for a competent curriculum, people that would train, and then create an over-arching training curriculum within your organization that starts all the way to interviewing new candidates for the position to orientation to on going practices.

Kristen:
The next question…could either one of you talk a bit more about the prevalence of traumatic stress among LGBT youth and some LGBT trauma specific resources that might be available?

Carl:
It's been an interesting experience for us in our program to observe that approximately 50% of the young people that we have worked with have traumatic stress disorder. There is a lot of research that shows that LGBT youth have experienced disproportionately high degrees of violence both in the home and in the shelter system and as they try to survive on the streets. And so, we have really focused on developing a pretty intensive clinical component into our program. We have a subcontract with the organization called the Institute for Urban Family Health, which provides us with both medical professionals and psychiatrists who is on site at our drop-in center. We have incorporated clinical social workers both into our drop-in centers and to our housing sites.

What we have really found is that incorporating that skill and bringing that level of clinical professionalism to our programming has really reduced the amount of violence and the amount of discharges as a consequence of violence that has happened in our program. I think what we see is that when young people have been traumatized and subjected to inordinate amounts of violence that they have more of tendency to react violently to stressful situations. By bringing them the mental health treatment and psychiatric care as a clinical component to our programming, it's really helped them better to cope with their trauma and with their experiences of violence.

Rich:
There is not much I can add to that. I think would agree that obviously the research does indicate that our youth are exposed to assaults and solicitation and exploitation in street environments as well as their own families and to the extent that programs can be designed with an eye towards trauma both to do quick assessments at any initial point of contact with the youth to talk about those issues, but then to have professional mental health opportunities to address those situations is important. I think to address your question, Kristen, unfortunately, I am not aware of any LGBT focused trauma tools that can be used. But, if we do find them, I would certainly be happy to post them to our website.

Carl:
The other thing that I think people should be aware of when working with this population is, I am not aware as much of the research, but I see it on a daily basis so I feel safe saying this. There is a heightened degree of suicidality with this population, and frankly, we hospitalized about 75 young people last year because of their expressions of wanting to kill themselves. I do think there are studies that show that there is a disproportionally high rate of suicide in the LGBT population in comparison to the straight population. I certainly believe that's strongly connected to their trauma.

Kristen:
Absolutely, thank you. The next question is related to substance abuse treatment, specifically, how can we apply some of the Alliance's best practice recommendations to substance abuse treatment? And, do you know of any targeted programs that are well-equipped to serve LGBT youth?

Rich:
That's an excellent question and I think one of the first things I would say again is that many times in our approach to the population, there may be some stereotypes that a lot of the youth that we work with have addiction issues, which I think needs to be separated out into recognizing the difference between exploration with alcohol and chemicals, abuse of alcohol and chemicals, and then actual addiction. We find, much like the adult population that the treatment spaces for the youth that have addictions is very limited and youth wait a very long time to access bed spaces for residential treatment care. What they also experience of course is that in many group support groups, many of the people that attend those groups tend to be older adults and the youth sometimes check out because they don't find their peers or a positive youth development approach to those services.

We are in the midst right now at the Alliance to try to help identify some best practices and chemical addiction treatment and support groups for homeless youth in general, not just focused on LGBT youth, but to help homeless youth in general to access youth friendly treatment and support groups. What does that look like and how is harm reduction involved in that approach. I am in the midst of doing that so we may have some things to report to our National Conference in late July, but I think some of the better programs I have seen do two things. One, they provide for mobile assessment of addiction issues through street outreach so that the street outreach workers that are in a continuum of care for homeless youth are well equipped to approach youth and begin discussion, not in an over intrusive way or a way that only focuses on addiction, but in the midst of a conversation, they are able to respond to issues or verbal cues they get around people's usage of drugs and are able to step them through a quick assessment of where they are at with there own usage, or abuse, or addiction issues. Then they are able to refer youth at an immediate point in time because we find with our homeless youth population that the less they can receive the treatment at the point in time they are asking for it, they typically don't do well when they have to sit on a waiting list.

The second thing I would like to say is that there are general differences between the homeless youth service community, shelters, drop-in centers, and transitional housing programs, and their

culture and the traditional chemical addiction treatment centers that we have. I think that in some program models, maybe in Arizona and Oregon that have done a good job about integrating a positive youth development from the homeless youth agencies into the addiction treatment world so that referrals are successful. I think you need to walk into the different cultures of the organizations and learn from each other. So, the addiction treatment community has to able to be accessible to the homeless youth field, and I think that means bringing a youth perspective. That's probably not everything you wanted, but that's what I would say at this point in time. Carl, do you have anything to add to that?

Carl:
Yes. Specifically in New York there are a handful of programs that are either LGBT specific or very LGBT competent in providing substance abuse treatment, and we work closely with those programs. The other thing that I wanted to say is that one of the biggest areas of difficulty that we have had historically has been inpatient drug treatment programming. Where I have particularly had this difficulty are with our transgender clients because they often seem to be very focused on gender roles in terms of how they assign their treatment. I have been aware of a number of instances where our transgender clients have been in programs where in the afternoon all of the programming breaks down into male programming and female programming and they have no idea how to deal with the transgender client, so the transgender client sits in a room by themselves, while everyone else is doing their gender oriented programming. I really think that we have to be advocating that our clients have access to substance abuse treatment that is culturally competent.

Kristen:
I think we have time for one more question. Do you know of any best practices related to encouraging healthy relationships among LGBT youth?

Carl:
We have developed a lot of internal policy around what we call shadiness. When I say that, what we observe is that many of the young people who come to us have had really terrible experiences being rejected quite harshly by their families, by their parents, in their schools, and in their communities. What we have observed is that the youth often internalize those messages of rejection into a kind of self-hatred, which they then cope with by projecting it to their peers, the people that remind them of themselves. If they have been rejected for being effeminate, they will pick on the person next to them for being effeminate. If they have been rejected for being perverse or weird or ugly, however it gets expressed, they tend to deal with that by putting those feelings onto the other people that remind them of themselves. It's painful to watch. We really incorporate very strongly into our programming and insistence that young people have to respect one another and accept one another. I have to say, it has been interesting to see that the LGBT youth not only get rejected and treated harshly in mainstream settings, but evening an LGBT setting they can be treated harshly by themselves and by each other.

We work very strongly to say that's unacceptable and we work very strongly to create an environment with the staff where we model that we affirm one another and we work really hard with the young people to get them to be supporting one another and seeing themselves as connected in their struggle to overcome the homophobia they have experienced. While it is

painful when they first come, to often see the shadiness acted out, it's also wonderful to see, after they spend some time in the program how supportive and kind they become to one another. They begin to understand that dynamic better.

Kristen:
Thank you, Carl. Before we end today's webcast, I would like to remind everyone to visit our website at www.homeless.samhsa.gov. There you can register and create a personal profile, connect with other users, access thousands of articles and resources, and get up to date information about events and training opportunities. Materials from today's webcast and others are also available on our "HRC Webcast Resources" topic page on the HRC website.

On behalf of the Homelessness Resource Center, I would like to sincerely thank our presenters, Carl Siciliano of the Ali Forney Center in New York City, and Richard Hooks-Wayman of the National Alliance to End Homelessness in Washington, DC, and all of your for taking time out of your day to be with us. Thanks everyone and have a great day!